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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 4 and 6 as shown below, and please cancel claims 2 and 5 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof.

Sub B5 1. (currently amended) A magnetic head having a magnetoresistive film comprising an anti-ferromagnetic layer, a ferromagnetic-pinned layer, a non-magnetic intermediate layer, a soft magnetic free layer, a non-magnetic and conductive film, and an oxide layer of metal selected from Ta, Nb, Ti, Hf, W or an alloy thereof laminated in this order on a substrate.

Claim 2 (canceled)

ai 3. (original) A magnetic head as defined in claim 1, wherein the thickness of the metal oxide layer is 1.0 nm or less.

4. (currently amended) A magnetic head as defined in claim 1, wherein the interlayer intermediate layer coupling field showing the magnitude of the ferromagnetic coupling between the ferromagnetic pinned layer and the soft magnetic free layer is substantially zero.

Claim 5 (canceled)

6. (currently amended) A magnetic head as defined in claim ~~5~~ 3, wherein the interlayer intermediate layer coupling field showing the magnitude of the ferromagnetic coupling between the ferromagnetic pinned layer and the soft magnetic free layer is substantially zero.

7. (original) A magnetic head as defined in claim 4, wherein the thickness of the metal oxide layer is 1.0 nm or less.

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8. (original) A magnetic recording apparatus including a magnetic recording medium for recording information, a magnetic head having a magnetoresistive film comprising an anti-ferromagnetic layer, a ferromagnetic pinned layer, a non-magnetic intermediate layer, a soft magnetic free layer, a non-magnetic and conductive film, and an oxide layer of metal selected from Ta, Nb, Ti, Hf, W or an alloy thereof laminated in this order on a substrate, a head slider for holding the magnetic head, an actuator for guiding the head slider to a predetermined recording position of the recording position on the recording medium, a spindle motor rotating the recording medium and a signal processing system for processing information read out of the magnetic recording medium.

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[Please add the following new claims:]

9. (new) A magnetic head as defined in claim 1, wherein the non-magnetic and conductive film is a non-magnetic and conductive oxidized stopper layer which substantially prevents at least one of diffusion of oxygen from the oxide protective layer and propagation of stresses caused by oxides with respect to the soft magnetic free layer and degradation of a soft magnetic characteristic of the soft magnetic free layer.

10. (new) A magnetic recording apparatus as defined in claim 8, wherein the non-magnetic and conductive film is a non-magnetic conductive oxidized stopper layer which substantially prevents at least one of diffusion of oxygen from the oxide protective layer and propagation of stresses caused by oxides with respect to the soft magnetic free layer and degradation of a soft magnetic characteristic of the soft magnetic free layer.--

REMARKS